TAPE NO. 49

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NARRATOR John Fraters

INTERVIEWER P. Lotz

PLACE No. B. St. Lo, poc

DATE Feb. 18, 1987

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Interview with John Fraters
Date of Interview: February 18, 1987, North B. Street, Lompoc
Interviewer: Phyllis Lotz
Transcriber: Phyllis Lotz

Begin Tape 1, Side 1

PL: Introduction

Can you tell me anything about your grandparnts?

Mr. F: No, in fact I don't remember my mother very well. I did not have Mama too long.

PL: What was your father's full name?

Mr. F: Manuel Catano Fraters and he was born in Castroville Ca. on Apri 2, 1870 nd he die March 16 1948. Mama was born on Sept. 13, 1877, her name was Mary Carrilla Martinez.

PL: Do you know when your grandparents came to America?

Mr. F: I don't know how my grandp[arents got to California. My Dad wasn't much to tell about things. He did say once or twice that he started out as a little boy helping on the farm. They lived on the other side of Shell Beach and everybody over there farmed beans in those days. (They still grow beans in that area as the weather is so good for that particular crop). He told us the story that when he was very young he had a little horse that he had earned and he made a small sled and he would go out into the fields after the threshing machine and pick up beans that they left behind, then he would thresh those out himself. Dad was a business man, he was always into something. I remember in 1923 when he got into the sheep business, he got into that business in a real bad time, 1923 and 24

when they were dry years. He had us three boys out to buy hay and the only place during those times to buy hay was in Buellton right where the trailer park is now, by the river. We got 36 shocks of hay and in those days they made shocks of hay that weighed at least 100 pounds, we went down there and in order to put the last shock on the wagon, my brother Manuel had to get way out on the edge while my brother Frank kicked it over to him, and we got all the hay on and were at the foot of the hill where you start up the hill into Solvang, it was an all gravel road and the wagon broke so we had to go home (Ballard), the horses were gentle so we rode them home and then we came back with a neighbors wagon for the hay and had to make to trips to get it all home. In the meantime Papa got the old Model T and came out to Lompoc somewhere and bought another wagon running gear to fix our wagon, and toted that thing all the way home behind the car.

PL: Was your mother from Castroville also?

Mr. F: No, she came from the Azores, Portugal. In fact before my Dad died he had brought all of her family here and got them started with jobs. He used to tell some stories about my uncle Frank Martin from Santa Maria. Frank came over here when he was 15 or 16, I guess this all came about when my father had the dairy with Mrs. Smith and he needed extra help so sent for Uncle Frank. My Dad always made these newcomers go to school. Uncle Frank liked to

play the harmonica, so when he got bored with school work he would go sit on the teacher's desk and play music for the teacher. What could you do with a kid of 16 in the first grade?

PL: That was here in the Santa Ynez Valley?

Mr. F: Yes, here in Ballard. Frank was always in trouble with the teacher. He finally got out on his own and went to the coast to farm near Tejiguas.

Years later I asked my Dad if there was any one back in the Azores that I could bring over and he said not to worry about anyone, the only one left was Aunt Annie and she would not come to America, as she was married and wanted to stay in the old country. My wife Stella, through her father had learned to speak and write Portugese so she started writing to Aunt Annie, and we would also send clothes to them. Aunt Annie had five children so as we had no children we adopted the youngest girl so our daughter is really my second cousin. But getting back to my father, when he came to that place in Ballard it was owned by a man named John Emmerick who had homesteaded 40 acres, and that was the property Dad bought, north of Johnsons on the west side of Alamo Pintado Road, and that was what we called The Old Ranch. I don't know if that was the old Emmerick house when my Dad bought the land, all those building are gone, just a windmill was left. Later on in the 1920's they built a

slaughter house back there near the creek, but that didn't last long. My brother and I were born on the Carl Muncton Place which had about 7 acres and that home was on the east side on Alamo Pintado Rd by the creek. That land adjoined the Davison place. Everyone said that place was haunted because it had real high ceilings and was of board and bat with no foundation and the dang house used to walk, you would be sitting in the house and the door would come open by itself and we kids used to make a big story up about it. We used to sit up at night and wait for the door to come open or something like that.

PL: When did you father come to Ballard?

Mr. F: I never did get that straight. He was here long before I was born. He sent for my mother to come from the old country and when she arrived they were married. They were married in the little church in Ballard (Presbyterian, now Lopers Funeral Home) and then later in the Mission Santa Ynez. I guess if she was going to live with him they had to get married as soon as possible at the closest church. These uncles I speak of were my mother's brothers. My Dad's brother was sort of an outlaw and lived out on the Carriso Plains by himself and they used to tell some wild stories about him. His name was Frank Fraters and he had no family.

PL: What did your father do on the ranch?

Mr. F: He farmed and also had this dairy with Mrs. Smith, but he stopped all that when Mother became ill and devoted all his time to her. She died in 1922 when I was about seven. In those years there was nothing to be done about the enlargement of the heart. Dad was pretty well off at that time and we had not stock, just the bare ranch and everthing was devoted to taking care of my mother. My Dad did the cooking, made the bread, and he hired a Doctor Clough to live there with us and care for Mama. There was another doctor that I remember, Dr. Busik who came to look about Mama. One little room was set aside for the doctor that had been my father's office. When I was little we took the old Model T and drove clear to San Berardino to a miracle healer for Mama, I was little and thought it was the greatest trip. We had some orange crates on the side of the car where we kept chickens to make soup for Mama. We got down there and it was all sand and dirt and lots of grapes and some olive trees, and we set up our tent and would pick the left over grapes. There was such a crowd that Mama never saw the healer.

We came back home and after that my Dad bought 100 acres that adjounded Oak Hill cemetery in Ballard and 3 acres of that was swamp with big willow trees and lots of water and there was a little cabin on the property and an old man by the name of Bidwell had built the cabin. By now all we had was three head of cattle, and we always kept a milk

cow. My brother Frank, was by now out of school. Our neighbor north of us was Mr. Snodgrass and Frank went to work for him. Mr. Snodgrass had a dairy and was a farmer. When Jim Snodgrass brought Frank home after harvest, he wanted to pay for Frank's working but my Dad would not let him, Dad said we were helping our neighbor, but Frank was mad, he wanted the pay. Frank said,"At least I should have gotten a pair of shoes!" Shoes then cost $2.40.

PL: What was your Dad farming then?

Mr. F: Most of the land was pasture and a little farming. My Dad did not farm that much, but he did farm the 100 acres to the east. He had the land on the west side of Alamo Pintado rented out to Andy Hansen of Santa Maria. Andy was the one with his brother-in-law, Clarence Thompson put in the slaughter house back by the creek. Ben Bumpuss of Los Olivos was the butcher. As kids we thought ol Ben Bumpuss was crazy because instead of bringing in the animal to butcher, he would go out to the farm where the animal was and kill it there and then drag the dead animal back to the slaughter house. According to my dates my family came here in 1895 and the oldest child was my sister, Mary, then two brother and me. Mary was born in 1895 Frank was born in 1906, Manuel, in 1911, and I, John was born in 1914. My Dad did grieve for my mother but later he did marry again, and I was told he found her through a matrimonial agency. She was a German lady and

was good to us. About that same time my sister Mary left her husband and being pregnant, she came to live with us and that was a bad thing. My Dad and the step-mother had quarrels.

PL: Did you go to Ballard School?

Mr. F: Yes, I walked across the creek to school. In those days we had that big flat to the west side of the road and if there was water in the creek we would generally plant it in alfalfa, course by the end of the year the gophers had most of it. We would irrigate that crop from the Alamo Pintado Creek. When the alfalfa had been cut, it was up to us boys to stop and pick up a shock of hay and bring it back to our place, on our way home from school. The place where we crossed the creek was called Davison's Crossing.

PL: Do you remember some of your teachers?

Mr. F: My first teacher was Jeannette Lyons, and my last teacher was Maud Fox. Before I was old enough to go to school, I would sneak out and go with my brothers. The school was so close to home and the big boys, 7th and 8th graders were real good to the little tots. I used to sit in the seat with Tom Petersen and I thought that was big stuff. Either Miss Fox or Mrs Jacamosy would bring something to eat for the students. Once, one of them brought a lamb shank and made stew one day on top of the wood stove, it wasa winter time and all the kids had something to eat. I

always walked home for dinner and the came back. The Arbelaitz girls would say, " Mama doesn't make stew like that, and if you guys eat that stew you are going to get sick, because the teacher does not skim off the grease!" And then none of the kids would eat that stew and the poor teacher was left with all of that.

Our teacher set up a little country store at school, and we would get credit when we sent away for Campbells Soup coupons or when samples came in. Once a week we would have credits and then we could buy something. We also had a Miss Case as a teacher, Bess Hunt used to substitute sometimes, I liked her. And Mrs Alice Lyons Potter and Grace Lyons Davison were teachers there too.

The Murphys and the Moniots were classmates, the Brehills were Mexican who worked for Weimer who built the roads up in that area when they began to pave the dirt roads.

End of DSide 1, Tape 1.

Begin Side 2, Tape 1

PL: Did you go on to high school?

Mr. F: Yes, for approximately one year then I went to work for $4.50 a day, board and room for Joe Arbelaitz on the hay baler. In them days they boarded everyone and it was a big deal for me, and Girl, hay is the best bed in the world! Joe had a big barn and we set our sleeping gear there.

PL: What about the Depression years here in the Valley?

Mr. F: I wasn't here then, I had gone to the San Joaquin Valley in the fall of 1928, to La Grande. This man taught me how to handle mules. I remember the first day I went up there to work, this man said he needed three men to work for him driving mule teams.

In 1932 I had been working on the Collins Ranch in Chowchilla taking care of their 14 mules for 55 dollars a month and board. Albert Paine and I worked at jobs together. They had 300 to 400 hogs there and we used to go into Chowchilla to get the whey from the creamery. We got to know those people at the creamery and they would give us pastries to bring back. In April (1932) the foreman came to tell us that the ranch had been taken over by the banks but if we wanted to stay on we would get 50 cents a day waith room and board. We stayed as there wasn't anywhere else to go. I was making two loads of hay a day when we were getting the better wages but after the lower wage it was hard to make one load a day. We went into Madera to buy our things. I told Albert that I could not stay any longer that there had to be jobs on the coast. We even tried our luck at panning gold in Bear Creek, but we didn't find any.

PL: When did you come back to Ballard?

Mr. F: In 1932, my brother Manuel was working for Joe Arbelaitz so I went there too, then I worked for Morgensen at this

place at the foot of Figueroa Mt. I took a job in Cat Canyon and that was the most miserable job I ever had, with a sheep herder who was a friend of my Dads. I never got paid because my Dad was a friend. Later when I asked for my wages and he did pay the cheque bounced.

My Dad was living with a woman with five kids, a Mrs Martin whose first husband had worked on the Pacific Coast Railroad before he died. My Dad was leasing the Boyd Place when she died so Dad rented the ranch to Joe Milikan and Clyde Laneer. Dad told me I could farm the Alamo Pintado Ranch for him because he still had the lease on it. I started to work at J.M. (Johns-Manville in Lompoc) but I had time to put the whole 120 acres in, in just four days and luck was with me because I had a bumber grain crop. I wanted to buy the ranch and could have with my father's help, but when it came to threshing we could not interest anyone in buying the crop, we finally sold for 72 cents a sack. We leased this Boyd Ranch from the daughters of A.S. Boyd.

I remember when Columbo bought a bran new baler for his four boys but only one of them would do any work, Peaches who works for the Chamberlains. Peaches, his Dad, John Carracaburu and I did the baling that year. John Carracaburu had been kicked in the face by a horse in the back country when he worked for the Forest Service, and he was disfigured for life.

I remember the Johnsons, Anker and Marian's parents. We

called them Uncle Henry and Aunt Mary. When Henry Johnson got his first baler my brother Frank was working for him and Henry wanted Frank to hitch up 6 horses a breast with 6 behind those and Frank said that was too dangerous but he did it and the horses got fouled up in the lines and were injured, so they went back to the three, fours.
I guess the Johnsons are the only ones left with their original land in Ballard.
A.M. Boyd had his land rented to McKittrick when I was growing up. Mr. McKittrick raised polo ponies and in fact they got a lot of prizes for them. The Lutons were above us, we joined them on the west side of the road. And the Curletti's lived there too. Marcus Sanchez was building a building for Curletti and got mad at one of his sons, threw a brick at the boy and nearly killed him. The Browns, Delbert and Gilbert were baseball players, they were much older than I. Every Sunday there was a baseball game in Los Olivos, and they would pass the hat to pay the admission if you could afford it. John Campbell was an old stage coach driver, I remember him, and he still had some of the horses that he drove. John worked for us on the hay baler when we were working on the Donovan Ranch on Santa Rosa Road out of Buellton. John used to tell us stories about his days as a stage coach driver and stopping in Ballard just below the Davisons. There was a little store there run by Grandpa Davison, and the stage stopped then and then went on to Gaviota. Perhaps they

stopped at Nossers at Nojoqui. John was a great old guy.

PL: You really wanted to be a farmer?

Mr. F: Yes, but when I farmed that last year I didn't like the situation as there was no money in it. I was out there from 1937 to 1950, and it was a good life but then they(?) started tell me what to do with the land, you can't have a dairy, or this and that and then tell me, "I'm going to take 40 acres away and put in walnuts," If they had wanted me to put in walnuts, they should have told me 6 months before hand. To lease is chancy. Old Mr. Hollister would shake hand with you and that was his word, good enough but the new generation don't always keep their work.

PL: Thank you, Mr. Fraters, for this interview.